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ST. HELENA

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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ST. HELENA 1/

I. GENERAL

1. The Territory of St. Helena, which is administered by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, consists of the main island of St. Helena and two dependencies: the island of Ascension and a group of islands forming the dependency of Tristan da Cunha.

2. Situated in the South Atlantic Ocean, approximately 1,900 kilometres from Angola and 2,900 kilometres from Brazil, the Territory covers a total land area of 412 square kilometres. Ascension lies 1,200 kilometres to the north-west of St. Helena, and Tristan da Cunha and the other small islands forming that dependency are approximately 2,400 kilometres to the south of it. St. Helena, where Jamestown, the capital of the Territory, is located, is the largest island, with an area of 122 square kilometres. It has a tropical climate tempered by trade winds which blow throughout the year.

3. The population of St. Helena, excluding its dependencies, was 5,664 as of February 1987, the date of the last census. Approximately one third is resident at Jamestown. The next largest communities are situated at Long Wood, in the east of the island, and at Half Tree Hollow, in the north-west. The remainder of the population live in small cottage communities or single cottages.

II. CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

A. General

4. The St. Helena Constitution Order of 1988, which entered into force on 1 January 1989, replaced the Constitution of St. Helena and dependencies introduced on 1 January 1967. Under the new Constitution, the Governor and Commander-in-Chief (who is appointed by the Queen) administers the Government. He is assisted by an Executive Council and a Legislative Council.

5. The Legislative Council for St. Helena consists of the Speaker, three ex officio members (the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Attorney General) and 12 elected members. The Executive Council is presided over by the Governor and consists of the ex officio members mentioned above and five of the elected members of the Legislative Council. Although a member of both the Legislative Council and the Executive Council, the Attorney General does not vote on either.

6. Elections are held by secret ballot at intervals of not more than four years by universal adult suffrage for those aged 18 years and older. Although two political parties are nominally in existence, since 1976 they have been inactive and elections have been held on a non-partisan basis.

7. The judicial system, based on the laws of the United Kingdom, is administered by the Supreme Court (there is a non-resident Chief Justice) and a Magistrate's Court presided over by the senior of the three magistrates sitting at a session. There is also a Juvenile Court and a Small Debts Court.

Provision exists for a Court of Appeal, consisting of three judges, which can sit at Jamestown or in London.

B. Action by the General Assembly

8. In his statement before the Fourth Committee on 3 November 1992, in explanation of vote after the vote on the draft decision on the question of St. Helena, the representative of the United Kingdom stated that as in previous years, the draft decision was unacceptable to his Government since it referred to military facilities on Ascension, an island which, although linked to St. Helena for administrative reasons, was not on the Committee's agenda. The suggestion that the very limited military facilities in question could be a source of concern regarding aggression or interference in neighbouring States was incomprehensible. His Government's policy towards the British Dependent Territories was conducted fully in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. 2/

9. On 25 November 1992, the General Assembly adopted, by a recorded vote of 104 to 2, with 43 abstentions, decision 47/413 on the question of St. Helena. By that decision, the Assembly urged the administering Power, in consultation with the Legislative Council and other representatives of the people of St. Helena, to continue to take all necessary steps to ensure the speedy implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in respect of the Territory and, in that connection, reaffirmed the importance of promoting an awareness among the people of St. Helena of the possibilities open to them in the exercise of their right to self-determination. The continued presence of military facilities in the Territory prompted the Assembly, on the basis of previous United Nations resolutions and decisions concerning military bases and installations in colonial and Non-Self-Governing Territories, to urge the administering Power to take measures to avoid the involvement of the Territory in offensive acts or interference against neighbouring States.

III. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

A. General

10. St. Helena possesses few natural resources. Agriculture, largely of a subsistence nature, is the main economic activity on St. Helena. Food production is insufficient to supply the island's needs and this, together with the lack of manufacturing industries, results in the importation of the vast majority of its requirements. The cost of living in St. Helena is higher than in the United Kingdom. There is no value-added tax.

B. Public finance

11. The main items of estimated revenue, including the British Government grant-in-aid, and expenditure for 1989-1991 were as follows:

(In thousands of St. Helena pounds) a/

	1989/90	1990/91
Revenue		
Direct taxes	623.5	676.6
Indirect taxes	840.7	859.9
Fines, fees and charges	111.4	132.4
Government rents and hires	88.2	98.0
Earnings of Government	118.3	160.1
Treasury receipts	455.5	507.3
Other	25.0	62.0
Total ordinary revenue	2 262.6	2 496.3
Grant-in-aid	3 950.0	4 136.0
Total	6 212.6	6 632.3
Expenditure		
Government	889.7	b/
Treasury and customs	600.0	b/
Pensions and gratuities	270.8	b/
Education	775.1	b/
Public health	918.2	b/
Social services	789.0	b/
Agriculture and forestry	733.4	b/
Public works and services	1 257.1	b/
Other	23.0	b/
Total	6 256.3	6 656.9

a/ The local currency is the St. Helena pound, which is equivalent to the pound sterling. St. Helena currency notes, introduced in 1976, and United Kingdom coins are legal tender.

b/ Not available.

12. The principal forms of taxation are income tax; withholding tax, payable by non-residents on incomes accruing in or deriving from the Territory, at a current rate of 25 per cent; personal tax, levied on persons whose incomes from outside St. Helena exceed £1,250 (married) or £950 (single), at the rate of £200 per annum for a single person and £400 per annum for a married person; and entertainment tax, charged on the price of admission to public entertainment at the rate of 20 per cent.

13. The Territory's statement of assets and liabilities at 31 March 1990 stood as follows:

(In St. Helena pounds)

Liabilities		Assets	
Deposits	2 789 511	Cash held locally by Ascension and Crown Agents, London	1 965 083
Special funds:			
Savings bank	4 021 027		
Other funds	26 313	Development: Special funds	25 852
Consolidated Fund	-	Development: Savings bank	3 810 967
		Development Fund	167 798
		Advances	630 621
		Trading account	236 530
Total	6 836 851	Total	6 836 851

C. Development projects

14. The St. Helena development programme is financed mainly through the overseas aid programme of the United Kingdom Government. Detailed proposals for individual projects are discussed in the context of the annual budget (after negotiations between the island Administration and the Overseas Development Administration) by the Executive Council, and subsequently ratified at the budget session of the Legislative Council.

15. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provided US$ 695,000 to finance a five-year term (1987-1992) livestock development programme. The long-term objective of the project is to guarantee St. Helena with an efficient and effective livestock industry, as well as to provide productive employment, increase agricultural income and make the island largely self-sufficient in pig and cattle feed.

Estimated development aid expenditure, 1989-1991

(In thousands of St. Helena pounds)

	Approved total grant		Expenditure	
Projects	1989/90	1990/91	1989/90	1990/91
Agriculture and forestry	2 080.0	2 230.0	382.2	282.0
Public utilities	1 874.3	2 369.4	713.1	740.7
Fisheries	600.0	600.0	118.8	105.8
Social and administrative services	5 317.5	4 964.8	744.7	287.2
Administrative and miscellaneous services	118.0	35.0	70.8	35.0
Other	-	766.0	-	247.6
Total	9 989.8	10 965.2	2 029.6	1 698.3

D. Agriculture, land tenure and livestock

16. The total area of the island is 12,032.2 hectares, approximately two thirds of which is barren. The results of a land use survey compiled through aerial photography were translated in new maps showing the following:

Land use	Hectares	Percentage
Arable	54.4	-
Gardens	323.1	3
Pasture	1 383.3	11
Forest/woodland	681.9	6
Scrub	2 576.9	21
Flax	326.0	3
Cleared flax	9.0	-
Barren	5 547.6	46
Bad land	916.7	8
Urban	213.3	2
Total	12 032.2	100

17. All crops grown on the island are food or fodder crops, but the island is not self-sufficient in these products. The only export crop produced on the island is coffee. Some 1.5 tons of coffee were exported in February 1990. Potatoes are the main carbohydrate staple, although this is greatly supplemented by imported rice. The agricultural production for 1990 was as follows: potatoes, 198 tons; pumpkins, 21 tons; brassica, 59 tons; onions, 10 tons; others/mixed vegetables, 65 tons; fodder crops, 232 tons; and fruit, including bananas, 68 tons.

18. Agricultural administration is carried out by the Director of Agricultural and Natural Resources, who is a member of and responsible to the Agricultural and Natural Resources Committee of the Legislative Council, the body that sets agricultural policy.

19. The agricultural activities in the Territory are regulated by the Agricultural Assistance Revolving Fund, which provided loans totalling £9,928.82 in 1991. The loans were used almost entirely for purchase of livestock or livestock feed. Other loans, such as those for the purchase of vehicles and other machinery, may be obtained from private or government sources.

20. A scheme designed to encourage new farmers into agriculture by paying them a three-day week wage for two years was started in 1980. It was modified in 1991, when the period was extended to four years, but the income was reduced by 25 per cent per annum. Poor results have precipitated a decision to phase it out, however. A new Farmers Assistance Scheme was set up to assist farmers by giving grants of 40 to 75 per cent of the investment in pasture establishment and improvement, water supply and livestock housing.

21. The St. Helena Growers' Cooperative Society provides seeds to many individuals and farmers, in addition to the large quantity imported by them. The Agriculture and Forestry Department sold over 259,000 vegetable and 74,157 flower seedlings in 1991. Some machinery (rotovators) and hand tools are available through private shopkeepers. Fertilizers and pesticides are supplied mainly by the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department.

22. Agricultural research is carried out on a range of agronomic subjects. The Prince Andrew School has an agricultural section, to which most of the agricultural education is confined.

23. The number of employees involved in agriculture and livestock services totalled 32 and the estimated expenditure during 1990/91 was £102,955. For a breakdown of the expenditure, see A/AC.109/1105, paragraph 19.

24. The livestock raised in the Territory are mainly cattle, sheep and pigs. Livestock production totalled 1,931 in 1989/90 and 2,592 in 1990/91.

E. Fisheries

25. The principal resource of the Territory is its fishing industry. Large tunas are available all year round. Skipjack and other species of tuna represent the greatest potential and are normally present from February to June. Mackerel and various demersel species, such as grouper, are also available all year round. Offshore resources associated with the two known seamounts within the 200-mile exclusive fishing zone were quantified by the offshore survey, 1985-1987.

26. The St. Helena Fisheries Corporation was established in November 1979 by an ordinance enacted by the Governor. Employment within the Corporation during 1990/91 consisted of 24 full-time and 3 casual workers, excluding fishermen, representing an overall decrease of 22 jobs compared with 1989/90.

27. Directorate of Fisheries was established in order to carry out government duties and responsibilities in the fisheries sector and to administer offshore licensing operations.

28. Local sales and export statistics are as follows:

	Local sales		Exports	
Year	Tons	Value	Tons	Value
		(pounds sterling)		(pounds sterling)
1986/87	107.69	98 311	85.63	85 666
1987/88	117.71	110 670	77.12	78 120
1988/89	116.98	115 805	92.46	88 057
1989/90	109.80	121 522	154.54	128 124
1990/91	83.21	108 406	154.53	128 124

F. Industries

29. There is no large-scale industry on St. Helena. All crafts are practised on a cottage-industry basis, with technical, financial and marketing facilities provided for by the Government, through the Home Industries Section. There is no industrial development financed by outside investment.

G. Transport, communications and utilities

30. There is no airport or airstrip on St. Helena, and no railway. The only port is Jamestown, which provides good anchorage for ships of any size. The island's main link with the outside world continued to be the RMS St. Helena, which is owned and chartered by the St. Helena Shipping Company, Ltd., and which plies between Avonmouth in the United Kingdom and Cape Town in South Africa,

calling at the Cape Verde islands and Ascension. The service receives an annual subsidy of some £2 million from the United Kingdom.

31. During 1990/91, a total of 495,112 cubic metres of treated and untreated water were supplied for domestic, commercial and agricultural purposes. The supply of treated water remained at a reasonable standard.

32. Electricity for the Territory is supplied by the Energy Division of the Public Works and Services Department. A total of 4,873,440 kilowatt-hours were generated in 1991 during the period under review. Electricity is generated by Ruperts Valley power station. Fuel is imported in bulk and pumped ashore. There are 45 kilometres of high voltage line carrying electricity to most of the Territory and 112 distribution transformers are connected en route.

H. Banking and credit

33. The only bank is the Government Savings Bank, which does not offer the full range of normal commercial banking facilities. Limited credit facilities for house-building and home improvements are made available on very easy terms through the Government Housing Loans Board and the Government Savings Bank. Total deposits at the Government Savings Bank at 31 March 1991 amounted to £3,455,379, compared with £3,320,504 during the previous year.

34. All financial transactions are ultimately channelled through London, and United Kingdom bank rates apply. No exchange controls operate on the island and to the extent that overseas transactions are channelled through London, United Kingdom control measures would apply. The deficit on the island's trading operations is, in effect, borne by the United Kingdom Treasury grant-in-aid. Local currency in circulation as at 31 March 1991 was £2,614,527, comprising £2,316,467 in notes and £298,060 in coins.

I. International trade

35. St. Helena's main imports are food products and tobacco, motor spirits and fuel oil, animal feed, building materials, motor vehicles, machinery and spare parts. Its only exports are fish and handicrafts. Its main trading partners remain the United Kingdom and South Africa. Others include Brazil and Ascension.

IV. SOCIAL CONDITIONS

A. General

36. Living standards are reported to be improving in St. Helena as various development projects continue to employ both skilled and unskilled workers. Wages remitted to St. Helena by workers on Ascension and the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) have enabled many families to build new homes or to improve the standard of existing ones. The rate of inflation continued to increase, however. There has been a continued increase in the retail price index, which at February 1991 stood at 113.0 (November 1987 = 100).

37. According to the administering Power, there are no racial or cultural problems in the Territory, which consists of a homogeneous English-speaking community with a single education system.

B. Labour

38. The government labour policy is to create the maximum number of job opportunities and to provide as much training as capacity and funds permit. Following the collapse of the flax industry, the Government of St. Helena has become the major employer of labour in the Territory with the Ascension island "User" and Falkland Islands (Malvinas) organizations fulfilling a vital role. According to the administering Power, 528 St. Helenians were employed as of March 1991 on Ascension, 209 on the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) and 114 in the United Kingdom, for tours of one to two years.

39. The territorial Government continued to give serious consideration to the restructuring of employment and decreed that it could not continue to guarantee employment for everyone. Community work is available for the unemployed. Those who are unable to obtain a position on this scheme and are willing and able to work can apply for unemployment allowances. Community employment is available to both men and women.

40. At the end of March 1991, there were 93 persons of both sexes between the ages of 18 and 60 years employed to do community work. Seasonal employment is provided for between 20 and 30 women in fish processing by the St. Helena Fisheries Corporation, a statutory Corporation, and St. Helena Canneries.

41. The principal categories of wage earners in St. Helena are agricultural labourers, skilled and general labourers, mechanics, engineers, motor drivers, building tradesmen, apprentices, fishermen and boatmen.

42. During the period under review, average weekly rates of pay were £37 for government agricultural and general labourers and £44 for commercially hired labourers in the same category; £40 for government skilled labourers and £50 for skilled labourers in the commercial sector; and £20 for government apprentices (£27 for apprentices in the commercial sector).

C. Public health

43. According to the administering Power, the general state of health of the population is good and its nutritional status is generally satisfactory. Public health is the responsibility of the Public Health Committee of the Legislative Council. The Chief Medical Officer administers the Public Health Department. The Territory has one general hospital at Jamestown, a mental hospital at Half Tree Hollow and a handicap day centre at Longwood. There are seven rural health centres at strategic sites in the Territory, which are visited regularly by the doctors and community nurses. Recurrent public health expenditure in 1990/91 was £953,800. Preventive medicine continued actively. Immunization against diphtheria, tetanus, poliomyelitis, measles, rubella and tuberculosis in the school population was 100 per cent.

D. Social security and welfare

44. The Employment and Social Services Committee of the Legislative Council has general responsibility for the Employment and Social Services Department, and is concerned with a wide range of matters. The annual budgetary provision for 1990/91 for social security and welfare was £917,200.

45. At the end of March 1991, 503 needy persons received income-related benefit payments in the form of cash issues varying from £16.20 to £33.20 per week. A Home Help Scheme was launched in 1981 and at the end of March 1991 employed some 57 women. In addition, unemployment allowance varying from £11.25 upwards is payable.

E. Education

46. Education is free. Attendance is compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 and 15 years, but the power to exempt children over 15 years lies with the Education Committee. There are 11 schools in the Territory. The number of teachers in 1991 was 114, 8 of whom were St. Helenians. In 1990/91, the school enrolment totalled 1,294 (1,242 indigenous).

47. Total expenditure on education in 1990/91 was £1,016,574.

V. DEPENDENCIES OF ST. HELENA

A. Tristan da Cunha 3/

1. General

48. The island of Tristan da Cunha and the smaller islands constituting the dependency of St. Helena are among the most isolated in the world. The main island, of volcanic origin, is almost circular in shape, with an area of 99 square kilometres rising to a central cone of 2,060 metres above sea level.

49. Gough Island is located approximately 370 kilometres south-south-east of Tristan da Cunha. There is a small weather station on this island staffed by personnel employed by the South African Government. Inaccessible and the three Nightingale islands, together with two adjacent islets, Middle and Stoltenhoff, are about 32 kilometres from Gough Island.

50. The climate is temperate and oceanic with rapid weather changes, a wide temperature range and frequent rain. The islands are of considerable scientific interest due to their isolation and their special flora and fauna, which include numerous species not found elsewhere in the world.

51. As at 30 June 1992, the indigenous population of Tristan da Cunha, mainly of mixed descent, was 296. During the period from 1 July 1991 to 30 June 1992, there were five births, five deaths and four marriages among the islanders. The only settlement is Edinburgh, on the north coast.

2. Constitutional and political developments

52. The Administrator of Tristan da Cunha, who is also the Magistrate, is appointed by the United Kingdom and is responsible to the Governor of St. Helena for the administration of the dependency. Owing to the infrequent postal communications between the two islands, however, the Administrator reports directly to the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. The Governor is usually informed of important dispatches that are sent to London.

53. The Administrator is advised by the Island Council, which has advisory functions in legislative and executive matters and which consists of eight elected and three appointed members. The Council meets at intervals of not more than three months. Committees of the Council are elected among members and other persons appointed to advise on agriculture and natural resources, public health and works, educational and social welfare, as well as on postal policies.

54. Elections to the Island Council and for the position of Chief Islander are held every three years. All candidates are required to be over 21 years of age, and one or more of the elected members of the Council is required to be a woman. All persons over 18 years of age are eligible to vote. There are no political parties in Tristan da Cunha.

3. Economic conditions

(a) General

55. According to the administering Power, the dependency is economically independent and remains in a favourable financial position, with revenues equalling about twice the normal annual recurrent expenditure.

56. The 1992/93 budget estimates revenue at £907,700 and expenditure at £663,049. The main sources of revenue were fishing royalties, interest on investments held in the United Kingdom, the sale of stamps and philatelic material and the sale of handicrafts. There is no taxation, although all males between the ages of 18 and 65 years pay a nominal tax of 65 pence annually and a levy on imported alcoholic drinks and cigarettes which is used to subsidize essential foodstuffs. As at 30 June 1992, deposits at the local Post Office Savings Bank amounted to £129,534, compared with £91,333 at 30 June 1991.

57. The main industry of the island is crayfishing, which represents the chief source of employment for the population. The royalty paid to the island for the concession is the principal source of government revenue.

58. The sale of postage stamps and other philatelic items is the island's second largest source of income. The unique postage stamps of Tristan da Cunha are much sought after by philatelists.

59. Private enterprise is encouraged. A café and a small potato crisp business are run by some of the women on the island. There is increased involvement in the making of handicrafts, notably knitwear, which are marketed through a government-supported handicraft shop to islanders, visitors and overseas customers.

(b) Agriculture, livestock and fisheries

60. Since 1968, the concession for crayfishing has been held by the South Atlantic Islands Development Corporation, a Bermuda-based company, and is operated by its subsidiary at Cape Town, Tristan Investments, Ltd. In order to monitor the crayfish resources, the concessionaire operates a tagging programme, the results of which are made available to the Government of Tristan da Cunha and fisheries advisers in London. Fishing regulations aimed at conserving the long-term viability of crayfish stocks were introduced in 1983 and a quota system came into being in 1991 to regulate total annual catches on each island of the dependency. Statistics regarding annual catches are made available to the Fisheries Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

61. An agricultural officer trained in the United Kingdom is employed by the Government to supervise local activities in agriculture and animal husbandry. He also performs basic veterinary work. Potatoes remain the main crop of the island. There is self-sufficiency in egg production and fresh vegetables are available throughout the year. Under the terms of legislation which entered into force in June 1985, the number of cattle has been limited to two head per family, in order to reduce the effects of overgrazing and to preserve pasture lands. At the end of December 1991, there were 193 cattle and 2,202 sheep in Tristan da Cunha, as well as four donkeys and a small number of pigs.

62. A small forest plantation in the east of the island produces timber which is used for gates and fencing, as well as for general building work.

(c) Communications and utilities

63. Electricity generated by the factory operated by the fishing concessionaire is made available for government installations and to individual homes. The price of electricity is eight pence per unit. The Government maintains a standby generator for emergency use to supply power to the hospital and the radio station.

64. There is no airfield on Tristan da Cunha. Passengers and mail arrive on the island by vessels normally coming from or going to Cape Town. There are approximately 15 kilometres of sealed roads and a number of tractors, cars and motorcycles on the island.

4. Social conditions

65. There is full employment for males on Tristan da Cunha, and work is available for most women with either the Government or the fishing industry. Wage increases are granted by the Government and by Tristan Investments, Ltd., based on the cost-of-living index calculated twice a year on information submitted to the Statistics Division of the Overseas Development Administration in London.

66. Pensions are provided to all persons over 65 years of age, as well as to widows and their dependent children and orphans. There is also a government pension fund to which employees contribute 4.25 per cent of their earnings up to

a certain maximum and employers contribute an equivalent amount. Legislation enables pensioners to retain casual earnings of up to 50 per cent of their pensions without deduction from their entitlements. Since July 1988, married couples' pension has been 55 per cent of the basic government wage.

67. Medical care is provided free of charge by the Government. The local hospital was built in 1971 and is staffed by a qualified medical officer from the United Kingdom, assisted by two locally trained nurses and a midwife. A qualified dental officer and an optician visit the island every other year and attend to all those requiring treatment. For serious cases, when proper treatment cannot be provided on Tristan da Cunha, patients are usually sent to Cape Town. The most prevalent illnesses are asthma, epidemic viral illnesses and musculoskeletal problems.

68. Recurrent expenditure on public health approved for 1992/93 amounted to £52,166, an increase of £4,691 over 1991/92.

5. Educational conditions

69. Education is free and compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 and 15 years. Enrolment as of June 1992 (excluding pre-school) was 36 pupils. During the period under review, two teachers returned to Tristan da Cunha after attending training courses in the United Kingdom. One assumed the responsibilities of education officer and the other was appointed as the deputy head of the school. There are also five assistant teachers at the school and two at the pre-school playgroup. With regard to adult education, working men and women are encouraged to attend evening classes for further education under a "day release" programme.

70. Recurrent expenditure approved for the school for 1992/93 amounted to £21,650.

B. Ascension

71. Information on the island of Ascension for the period ending 1988 is contained in a previous working paper on St. Helena prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/1071). No information for the period under review has been received by the Secretariat.

Notes

1/ Information regarding St. Helena and its dependencies, Tristan da Cunha and Ascension, has been derived from published reports and from information transmitted to the Secretary-General by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations, on 27 November 1991, 4 March and 31 August 1992.

2/ A/C.4/47/SR.8, para. 44.

3/ Information on Tristan da Cunha has been derived from information transmitted to the Secretary-General by the Government of the United Kingdom under Article 73 e of the Charter, on 31 August 1992.